Ending Poverty and Removing Barriers to Work for Disabled People in Glasgow beyond Covid-19

Report and Recommendations from Disability Workstream to Glasgow Social Recovery Taskforce

University of Glasgow

GLASGOW DPO NETWORK
Connect Collaborate CoDesign

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Summary and recommendations

Not only have disabled people's life chances not improved in decades, but they have in fact deteriorated, with the Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities declaring their lives a "human catastrophe" in 2017[1], and Covid-19 "supercharging" inequalities over the last two years (GDA, 2020). 24% of Glasgow's working age population are disabled people, and 31% of all Glasgow residents have one or more health condition. Disabled people disproportionately experience chronic poverty and barriers to the world of work. About half of households living in poverty include a disabled person. Of disabled people of working age, fewer than half have a job. None of the major challenges Glasgow faces today can be solved without tackling disabled people's poverty and unemployment. This report recommends practical actions by public services, Disabled Peoples' Organisations and other partners to tackle disabled peoples' poverty and remove barriers to employment for disabled people in Glasgow, thinking beyond Covid-19.

The report is from the Disability Workstream of Glasgow City Council's Social Recovery Task Force (SRTF), supported by a researcher from University of Glasgow's Centre for Disability Research. It draws together evidence from Glasgow, Scotland, and the UK on the poverty drivers **(chapter 3)** and employment barriers **(chapter 5)** affecting disabled people. It demonstrates how poverty drivers and employment barriers intertwine: disabled people tend to have higher living costs and inadequate social security benefits, and experience both a disability pay gap and a disability employment gap. The report describes the range of policy levers available at UK, Scotland and Glasgow levels to address disabled peoples' poverty **(chapter 4)** and reduce Scotland's Disability Employment Gap **(chapter 6)**. Scotland has a policy to halve its Disability Employment Gap by 2038. As Scotland's largest city, Glasgow is pivotal to making sure the target is achieved - including for disabled people furthest from the labour market.

The Disability Workstream, which was co-convened by Glasgow Disability Alliance, held an online co-design event on 26 May 2021 involving disabled people, public service and third sector workers, and Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPOs). Disabled participants gave real-world examples of the lived experience of poverty, barriers to work, and what would help. Public service and third sector workers and DPOs described their work with disabled people, and potential ways to decisively reduce barriers affecting disabled people. **Chapter 7** draws together themes from the co-design event, boosted by evidence from BAME disabled people and disabled people with experience of poverty.

[1] https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/comment-and-media/austerity-policies-created-human-catastrophe-un-committee-chair-condemns-uks-record-human-rights/

Employment themes include tackling disabling attitudes and barriers that long pre-date Covid-19, transforming employability services to enable more personalised control by disabled people, changing employers' practices at scale ('employerability'), and involving DPOs and diverse disabled people in making change.

Poverty themes include achieving accessible welfare rights and benefit advice, simplifying claim processes, improving disability-related benefits, and the vision of a Minimum Income Guarantee. The co-design event asked for progress for disabled peoples' work and poverty in Glasgow to be accountable and measured.

To decisively address poverty and barriers to employment experienced by disabled people in Glasgow, the Disability Workstream recommends the actions in the below table **(page 4)**. There is a balance of actions for Glasgow City Council and other Community Planning partners, members of the Glasgow Local Employability Partnership, financial inclusion and money advice services, and DPOs. The SRTF Disability Workstream has completed its work on this topic, and leadership for implementation of the recommendations now passes to the **Glasgow Community Planning Partnership (GCPP) Executive Group**. The **employment recommendations** seek to contribute to Glasgow's strategy for the implementation of No One Left Behind, led by Glasgow Local Employability Partnership, as part of the national commitment to reducing the Disability Employment Gap, with a decisive shift to improve employability and 'employerability'. The **poverty recommendations** propose a co-designed **Glasgow Disability Poverty Reduction Plan** to contribute to reducing disabled peoples' poverty in Glasgow, with a focus on actions to improve disabled peoples' access to benefits and tackling non-financial barriers to getting out of poverty.

Disabled Peoples' Organisations are a resource for public services, the third sector, employability services and mainstream employers to draw on. DPOs can offer Disability Equality Training and provide practical outreach and connections to disabled people for mainstream organisations and employers. For example, as a result of the co-design event, Glasgow City Council (GCC) has funded a Digital Employability worker based at GDA to reach and provide support to disabled people across Glasgow.

The recommendations in this report will enable thousands of disabled people in Glasgow to be able to improve and secure their economic and social contributions to the city, to gain greater opportunities and higher incomes. Ending poverty and removing barriers to work for disabled people will ultimately benefit everyone in the city.

The recommendations in this Poverty and Work report connect with recommendations in the other three SRTF Disability Workstream reports on Participation, Health and Social Care, and Mental Health.

Recommendations

Employment and poverty report: implementation and integration						
Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
1	Leadership to drive implement-ation	Glasgow City Disability Workstream and Glasgow Community Planning Partnership (GCPP) Executive Group	• GCPP Executive Group take a collective decision to implement the actions in this report • Include report in Glasgow Community Action Plan	• Report is approved and progress monitored by Disability Workstream /GCPP Exec • Report recommend-ations being implemented	• Early wins progressed e.g., Disability Equality Training • Progress on actions reviewed by Disability Workstream / GCPP Exec	• Progress on more recommend-ations • Progress reviewed by Disability Workstream / GCPP Exec and Disability Workstream
2	Joint work by CPP partners and DPOs to reduce wider barriers to participation for disabled people in Glasgow	All Community Planning partners (CPP) Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPOs)	• See Recommendations in SRTF Disability Workstream Report: **Transforming participation for disabled people in Glasgow beyond Covid-19** • Report recommendations include: reducing barriers in the real world (e.g. accessible transport, accessibility to buildings and the wider public realm); reducing barriers in the digital world (e.g. online access, assistive technology); recognising diversity among disabled people.			

Employment recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
1	Employment rates for disabled people increase across all CPP partners	All CPP partners, notably the largest employers (e.g. GCC; NHS GG&C; Glasgow & West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations; GHA, Glasgow Life, Third Sector) DPOs	All CPP partners in their role as employers commit to work with DPOs to achieve best practice in (a) recruitment, (b) retention, (c) career development, of disabled people. **Actions to include:** • disability monitoring best practice established • EQIAs completed and regularly reviewed of organisation's action plans on recruitment and retention of diverse disabled employees • effective engagement with employability services • workplace reasonable adjustments and support in place • Develop Peer Support Networks for disabled employees	• CPP partners are accessing disability employment best practice advice and training from DPOs (inc. disability monitoring, EQIA, work with employability services, reasonable adjustments) • Monitoring of numbers of diverse disabled staff at all levels by CPP partners • Sharing of disability employment best practice learning across CPP partners Increases in disabled staff at all levels • Evidence of Peer Support Networks	• CPP partners and DPOs agree framework for delivery of best practice advice and training across CPP partners • CPP partners have shared baseline data on numbers of disabled staff • Early set up of Peer Support network	• DPOs have started delivery of best practice advice and training across CPP partners • All CPP partners have increased numbers of disabled staff at all levels • Development of Peer Support Network and Review of Progress

Employment recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
2	Major Glasgow private sector employers recruit and retain more disabled employees	GCC heads CPP heads Glasgow Local Employability Partnership (LEP) members (heads) DPO leads	• Develop a process for GCC, LEP, CPP and DPO leads to co-create disability employment targets with major Glasgow employers • Explore establishment of a Glasgow DPO Employerability Hub – a source of expertise for employers who want to engage directly with disabled people to get training, advice, information, and support on best practice in recruitment and retention of disabled people; and to support disabled people seeking self-employment	• Disability employment targets agreed and implemented for major Glasgow employers • Scoping meetings with Glasgow DPOs to explore Employerability Hub	• Private sector targets for employment of disabled people agreed with 'quick win' major employers	• Report against targets set

Employment recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
3	Increase Disability Equality Training (DET) across key public services, employability partners and welfare rights partners	DPO staff and members Leads for staff employment (Human Resources) at all Community Planning Partners Leads for staff employment (HR) for all Glasgow LEP members	• DPO staff and members to offer DET to CPP and LEP HR leads as a CPD/ learning opportunity • Deliver DET across CPP organisations and LEP partners • Offer DET to welfare rights advisers and financial inclusion services **(see also Poverty rec 2 below)**	• Number of CPP and LEP HR leads taking up DET • Number of officers in CPP organisations, LEP partners and welfare rights advisers / financial inclusion services taking up DET	• DET delivery strategy agreed and delivered by DPOs.	• DET has started to be delivered across CPP and LEP HR leads • DET has started to be delivered to officers in CPP organisations, LEP partners and welfare rights advisers / financial inclusion services

Employment recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
4	Maximise Glasgow's contribution to reducing the Disability Employment Gap as part of No One Left Behind (NOLB) activities, by co-reviewing all employability programmes, support, and funding streams	GCC employability leads Glasgow LEP heads DPO leads	• Simplify and enhance access to employability services for diverse disabled people, including those most distanced from the labour market (e.g., online, home visits, in-office, 'no wrong door' approach, accessible websites, communication support) • Continue disabled people's involvement in co-design and evaluation of Working Together for a Fairer Glasgow: Quality Standard for Employability Services • Co-design a clear statement of the right to appropriate employability support, (e.g. access and communication support needs, rights to redress for lack of provision)	• GCC, LEP members, and DPOs actively collaborating to simplify/enhance disabled peoples' access to employability services • GCC, LEP members and DPOs actively collaborating on a mandatory quality standard for employability services • GCC, LEP members and DPOs actively collaborating to co-design a clear statement of the right to appropriate employability support	• GCC, LEP members and DPO leads agree process to: simplify/ enhance disabled peoples' access to employability services; establish a quality standard; co-design a statement of the right to appropriate employability support	• 'Quick win' changes to simplify/ enhance disabled peoples' access to employability services implemented • Quality standard drafted • Right to appropriate employability support statement drafted

Employment recommendations						
Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
5	As part of NOLB activities, co-review all funding that allows individuals to access training and support, to decisively shift this funding to be attached to the individual	GCC employability leads Glasgow LEP heads Social Security Scotland (SSS) DPO leads	• Pilot approaches for disabled people to be in control of training and support funding (e.g., like Individual Learning Accounts or ILF funds) • Develop a case management model with holistic and open-ended approaches to support disabled people to sustain their employment/ employability goals	• Numbers of pilots of individual funding/case management approach underway • Evaluation by disabled people participating in pilot schemes	• GCC, LEP heads, SSS heads, DPO heads meet to devise pilot approaches • Evaluation approach co-designed with disabled people	• Pilots for disabled people underway, with evaluation in place

Poverty recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
1	Agree a plan to reduce disabled peoples' poverty in Glasgow	GCC heads Other CPP partners DPO leads Glasgow welfare rights advisers and financial inclusion services	• Co-design a 'Glasgow Disability Poverty Reduction Plan' including poverty reduction targets and strategic actions to tackle disabled peoples' poverty • Recognise diversity among disabled people and plan to meet needs	• 'Glasgow Disability Poverty Reduction Plan' created • Disability poverty reduction targets agreed • Strategic actions agreed • Plan includes actions to meet needs of diverse disabled people	• Co-design group has started work	• 'Glasgow Disability Poverty Reduction Plan', targets and strategic actions agreed

Poverty recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
2	Co-design interventions to increase uptake of financial support and advice to reduce disabled peoples' poverty	GCC Other CPP partners DPO leads Glasgow welfare rights advisers and financial inclusion services	• Ensure existing statutory and third sector money and welfare advice services (inc. Financial Inclusion Support Officers in schools) are accessible to more disabled people • Sustain and expand accessible DPO-led/third sector welfare rights projects (e.g., 'Rights Now!') • Recognise diversity among disabled people and plan to meet needs	• More disabled people using welfare rights and financial inclusion services, including diverse disabled people • Higher take-up of disability benefits • Welfare rights and financial inclusion services taking up DET offered by DPOs **(see Employment rec. 2, above)**	• GCC, other CPP partners, DPO leads, welfare rights advisers and financial inclusion services meet to co-ordinate and monitor uptake of financial support and advice services by diverse disabled people • DET being taken up	• Partners continue to monitor and improve uptake of advice services and take-up of benefits by disabled people

Poverty recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
3	Maximise uptake by disabled people of all eligible income-related support	GCC Other CPP partners Social Security Scotland DPO leads Glasgow welfare rights and financial inclusion services	• GCC lead co-design of a pilot process with Social Security Scotland, DPOs and Glasgow welfare rights / financial inclusion services to simplify access for Glasgow's disabled people to all forms of income-based support	• Pilot implemented • Evaluation by disabled people through DPOs	• Pilot(s) and evaluation co-designed	• Pilot(s) and evaluation implemented
4	Overcome non-financial barriers to tackling disabled peoples' poverty, including: (a) accessing food, (b) digital inclusion, (c) isolation, (d) transport	GCC DPO leads Glasgow welfare rights and financial inclusion services	• Partners co-design a plan to better engage food, digital, sociality and transport providers to reduce barriers for disabled people, accounting for geographic location and diversity of impairments	• Affected services (e.g., food, digital, sociality and transport providers) have more disabled people using services • Evaluation by diverse disabled people, facilitated by DPOs	• Group convened to co-design plan has met	• Plan co-designed • Evaluation process designed

Poverty recommendations

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
5	Develop long-term work in relation to Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) to tackle poverty	GCC Other CPP partners DPO leads Glasgow welfare rights and financial inclusion services	• Partners drive process and conversation in Glasgow about how a MIG can help tackle poverty for disabled people • Partners engage with Scottish Government Minimum Income Guarantee Steering Group[2]	• Disabled people and their needs are part of Glasgow and Scotland 'conversations' on MIG	• Ongoing activity by partners	• Ongoing activity by partners

Employment and poverty: monitoring progress

Priority No.	Aim	Who	Action	Indicators	Progress at 6 months	Progress at 12 months
1	Monitor Glasgow's contribution to reducing the Disability Employment Gap and achieving poverty reduction targets set in 'Glasgow Disability Poverty Reduction Plan'	GCC Financial Inclusion Team CPP heads DPO leads	• GCC Financial Inclusion Team CPP services and DPOs jointly monitor disabled peoples' poverty and disabled peoples' employment in Glasgow	• Co-design monitoring process and metrics (to include quantitative statistics, qualitative data, diverse disabled peoples' lived experiences)	• Monitoring processes designed	• Baseline data on the Glasgow Disability Employment Gap collated • Baseline data on disability and poverty in Glasgow collated • Diverse lived experience panel convened

[2] Minimum Income Guarantee Steering Group https://www.gov.scot/groups/minimum-income-guarantee-steering-group/

1. Introduction

Coronavirus has widened inequality, with disabled people facing some of the worst impacts and unintended consequences of the pandemic and responses, supercharging inequalities they already faced. Disabled people in the UK, Scotland and Glasgow have disproportionately experienced poverty and worklessness for many years, to the extent that *'reducing poverty among disabled people has to be at the heart of any attempts to reduce poverty overall in the United Kingdom'* (JRF/NPI, 2016, p.4). This report, number two of four from the Social Recovery Task Force (SRTF) Disability Workstream, makes recommendations to tackle longstanding poverty and unemployment for disabled people in Glasgow, so advancing Scotland's work to tackle these two scourges.

The Disability Workstream held a co-design event on this theme on 26 May 2021, with 69 disabled people, public service and third sector workers, Glasgow City Councillors, and disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs) participating in Zoom discussions and workshops. At the event, elected members and DPO leads made contributions to help people think about the issues:

> 'I'm not, personally, a big fan of building back better. I don't necessarily think what we had before was something that was good, so I think we have to look at new ways of working and to challenge our structural barriers. I'm really excited by this work. It is something we have had lots of discussions about before the pandemic, but I think this really is a catalyst for change.' (Cllr Jen Layden, Chair, SRTF)

> 'Poverty is a choice. Not by those in poverty but by society and politicians to allow that to happen.' (Cllr Richard Bell)

> 'We would agree with what Councillor Bell said about poverty not being inevitable, being about choices, and we need to make different choices together.' (Tressa Burke, Chief Executive, Glasgow Disability Alliance)

The recommendations of this report are in the table on page 4. Below, we set out the aims and principles of the report, the evidence and levers to change poverty and unemployment for disabled people in Glasgow, and the evidence from the 26 May 2021 co-design event and related activities. The findings and themes in the report have been sense-checked with Glasgow's DPO Network[3] who contribute lived experience insights to the Disability Workstream.

[3] **'Glasgow DPO Network'** – comprises organisations led and controlled by disabled people including: Deaf Scotland, Flourish House, Glasgow Access Panel, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, Glasgow Disability Alliance, Mental Health Network (Greater Glasgow), People First Scotland (Glasgow).

2. Aim and principles of this report

a. Aims

The **SRTF** aims to address the societal and equality impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in Glasgow, including by (SRTF Terms of Reference 3.4):

- using data and evidence to inform clear actions, tracking and reporting
- influencing the resources of CPP partners
- recommending actions to be included in the Glasgow Community Plan.

The **Disability workstream**'s purpose is to make recommendations to the SRTF to ensure that post-Covid-19 recovery planning addresses the inequalities facing disabled people focusing on (15 Dec 2020 SRTF Disability Workstream meeting):

- balancing immediate actions and longer-term planning with a roadmap and progression measured in milestones
- creating enabling conditions for change by using existing levers and creating new opportunities
- building resilience for the future as well as making practical recommendations to tackle pre-existing inequalities.

b. Principles

Two principles in the SRFT Terms of Reference strongly underpin this report:

- **2.1** Human Rights and Equalities will be embedded within every aspect of decision making of the SRTF, and the wider renewal and recovery programme. The SRTF will adhere to the requirements of the Fairer Scotland Duty and Public Sector Equality Duty and will ensure these requirements are at the forefront of all discussions and when making strategic decisions.
- **2.2** The voice of communities will be heard within every aspect of decision making of the SRTF, and the wider renewal and recovery programme. Communities will be asked and supported to participate in the SRTF and its workstreams to ensure their experiences inform the design and delivery of recovery approaches.

The 26 May 2021 co-design event applied a series of further principles to shape its deliberations, which also underpin this report:

- **Collaboration:** We all bring a different piece of the puzzle to the table.
- **Community Empowerment:** Those who face barriers and inequality should be in the driving seat of efforts to tackle them.
- **Social model of disability:** 'Disabled by society not by our bodies': impairments and conditions are a normal part of life – inequality is not. Disability is caused by the barriers we face in a society that fails to accommodate our diversity. Hence, we use the term 'Disabled people' as a political identity, not 'person with a disability'.
- **Independent Living:** After centuries of institutionalisation, disabled people fought for and won the right to exercise choice and control over their lives. Independent Living includes having self-determination and having the right systems and support to equally participate.
- **Disabled people speak for themselves:** 'Nothing about us without us.' Disabled peoples' participation is best supported by capacity building, peer support and accessible information and communication - all provided by disabled people led organisations (DPOs).
- **Relationships & behaviours matter:** How we do things is as important as what we do: honesty, transparency and mutual respect as partners of equal value, are key to co-design.
- **Disability Equality will benefit everyone:** Glasgow has lots of disabled people. 24% of Glasgow's working age population are disabled people, rising to 64% of those aged over 65[4]. 31% of all Glasgow residents have one or more health conditions (GCHSCP, 2020). None of the major challenges Glasgow faces today can be solved without tackling disabled people's poverty and unemployment.

[4] https://www.understandingglasgow.com/indicators/health/trends/disability_trends_scottish_cities/overview

3. Evidence on disabled peoples' poverty

Introduction

The life chances of disabled people have barely changed in decades, with disabled people disproportionately experiencing chronic poverty and endemic barriers to the world of work.

There is persistent UK-wide (e.g. PMSU, 2005; JRF, 2022 pp. 57-59), Scottish and Glasgow evidence on the disproportionate poverty experienced by disabled people. Poverty is caused by a combination of inadequate social security benefits, higher costs affecting disabled people, economic inactivity, and lower pay experienced by those disabled people that are in work. Lack of work, being a disabled person, and living in poverty are interlinked. The JRF report 'Poverty in Scotland' (2021, pp.35-36) finds that the biggest risk factor for putting a child into poverty is to live in a household where no one works, that more than half of workless families in poverty in Scotland are economically inactive, and that the majority of economically inactive families in poverty in Scotland are permanently sick or disabled. They find that children in households where someone is disabled make up 40% of all children in poverty, totalling 100,000 children (JRF, 2021, p. 20) – and that the relationship between unemployment and child poverty is disproportionate in Glasgow: *'In 2019, 11% of children in Scotland were in workless households compared with almost one in four children in Glasgow (Office of National Statistics, 2020)'* (JRF, 2021, p.35).

Whilst rates of economic inactivity are much higher for disabled people than non-disabled people, this does not reflect less willingness to work. In 2019[5] around one quarter of 'inactive' disabled people wanted to work, higher than the proportion of 'inactive' non-disabled people (less than one fifth). There are 86,000 disabled people in Scotland who are classed as 'inactive' but would like to work, and a further 36,000 who are unemployed and actively seeking work (SG, 2018, p.25).

a. Greater poverty

The Scottish Health Survey (2017) found that 18% of disabled people experienced food insecurity, compared to 5% of non-disabled people. The Trussell Trust have found that low-income households with a disabled member are almost three times more likely to use food banks than other low-income households. (SG, 2019a, p.71)

[5] ONS, Annual Population Survey

In a UK-wide study, New Policy Institute and JRF (2016), found:

- 48% of people in poverty live in a household where someone is disabled.
- 44% of disabled young adults (16-24) are in poverty, along with 66% of single disabled people living alone.
- 18% of working age disabled people are severely materially deprived (lacking basic items) – three times as high as the proportion of non-disabled working-age people.

The Centre for Civic Innovation/GCC Financial Inclusion Team (2020) estimate that in Glasgow, 5,113 children live in households in poverty where at least one person is disabled, and that on average, households with a disabled child are £70 per week below the poverty line. Their report recognises that the benefit data used in the report (eligibility for council tax reduction and housing benefit) is a proxy for indicators of poverty, and that many disabled people may be in poverty but not eligible (or aware of their eligibility) for these benefits. However, as discussed below, even disability benefits are not sufficient to meet the additional costs faced by disabled people with and without school-age children.

JRF's 'Poverty in Scotland' (2021) recommendations include that *'[The Scottish Government] must include a far greater scale and pace of activity to support those most at risk of poverty, including single parent families, families where someone is disabled and minority ethnic families.'* **As Scotland's largest city, Glasgow's contribution will make the biggest difference to reducing disabled peoples' poverty.**

b. Higher costs and squeezed benefits

Incomes for households receiving disability benefits are overestimated and do not truly reflect the funds that families have available to cover basic needs (JRF 2021, p22, see also McHardy et al, 2021). Disabled people tend to have higher costs of living than non-disabled people. UK-wide, SCOPE (John, Thomas and Touche, 2019) estimate that:

- On average disabled adults face extra costs of £583 a month.
- One in five disabled adults faces extra costs of over £1,000 a month, even after they have received benefits designed to meet those costs.
- Disabled people's money doesn't tend to go as far: on average, £100 for a non-disabled adult is equivalent to £68 for a disabled person.

- Having one disabled child costs an average family an extra £528 a month. For almost one quarter of families with disabled children, extra costs amount to over £1,000 a month.

However, disabled people have faced persistent squeezes on their rights to and levels of social security benefits due to the UK austerity programme of the past decade (Macdonald & Morgan, 2021; Patrick et al, 2022, p.7; SCORRS, 2020).

In Glasgow, innovative and accessible welfare rights projects such as 'Rights Now!', initially funded by Glasgow City Council, and run by GDA, have supported disabled people to claim their entitlements. However, pandemic pressures resulted in a loss of funding for Rights Now, which tackles poverty for disabled people by providing accessible and tailored welfare rights, advice and representation. During 2020-21 Rights Now was funded via Covid-19 emergency grants, which were temporary, leaving this vital service vulnerable.

In addition to accessible welfare right provision, there is a need to uprate disability benefits and social security payments to an appropriate level to meet disabled peoples' needs and extra costs. With more benefits devolved to Scotland now, there is an opportunity for nation-wide change.

c. Impairment-specific inequalities and intersectional barriers

Disabled people have intersectional identities, including social class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age. The Poverty and Inequality Commission (May 2021) demonstrate how intersectional inequalities have negative impacts on disabled peoples' poverty in many areas of life. Some sub-groups of disabled people also experience poverty in specific ways. For example, there is a relationship between financial hardship and mental health problems (MHF, 2020), and people with mental distress can experience disproportionate debt problems (Bond & D'Arcy, 2021).

d. Covid-19 and disabled peoples' poverty

The Covid-19 period revealed more evidence of poverty affecting disabled people. Disabled people experienced extra costs during Covid-19, whilst not benefitting from the £20 Universal Credit uplift.[6] Covid-19 disproportionately affected disabled peoples' lives, including access to groceries, medication and essentials (27% for disabled people, compared with 12% for non-disabled people).[7] GDA's Covid-19 engagement with disabled people found that 57% were worried about money, and 47% were worried about access to food (GDA, 2020). During the first 5 months of Covid-19, GDA delivered food, medications and essentials to 1,251 people in 874 households (GDA, 2020, p.11).

[6] https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/financial-impact-covid-19-disabled-people-and-carers

[7] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsondisabledpeopleingreatbritain/february2021

The **Social Renewal Advisory Board** post-Covid-19 report to Scottish Government (SG, Jan 2021)[8] called for action in five areas to deliver enough money for a decent life from paid work and social security, and to reduce poverty. These included:

- A **Minimum Income Guarantee** (see page 22) as a long-term aim, taking into account household dynamics and additional costs of disability, and building on the Citizen's Basic Income pilots in Scotland.
- Develop an approach to **anti-poverty work and money advice**, including personal debt and welfare rights, designed around the needs of the individual.
- Ensuring everyone has access to nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable **food**.
- Set a target to end **digital exclusion** in the next parliamentary term.

e. Disability pay gap

Disabled people face double discrimination in the labour market, making it harder to solve poverty through getting a job. Not only are they less likely to have a paid job, but when they do, disabled people earn substantially less than their non-disabled peers: the disability pay gap. To make things worse, as seen above, disabled people also tend to have higher costs of living. In the UK, 25% of working-age disabled people earn less than 50% of the median income, compared with 13% of non-disabled working people (New Policy Institute & JRF, 2016). The TUC (2020) found:

- Scotland (24.8%) has a higher disability pay gap than for the UK overall (19.6%).
- A disabled worker, working 35 hours per week, on average earns £3,822 per year less than a non-disabled worker.
- The pay gap for disabled women is nearly 9% higher than that for women overall
- Disabled women earn 36% less than non-disabled men.

JRF (2020, p.8) note that disabled people tend to be paid less than non-disabled people with the same qualification level, including at degree level.

So, being able to get well-paid work is also necessary to tackle poverty for disabled people. This is analysed further in section 5.

[8] https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/

4. Current policies and levers to end disabled peoples' poverty

There are a series of policies, UK-wide, Scottish and City-wide, which can be used to address disabled peoples' poverty in Glasgow. These include:

Scottish Government Child Poverty targets: the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act mandated that by 2023/24 fewer than 18% of children should be in relative poverty, and fewer than 10% by 2030/31. However, the child poverty rate in Scotland has been increasing, the most recent estimates suggest it is around 26%[9], and in Glasgow estimates are up to 32.1%[10]. Whilst it is welcome that the Scottish Child Payment is doubled from April 2022[11], child poverty targets will not be met locally or nationally, unless specific action tackles the causes of poverty for families with disabled parents and/or disabled children. Glasgow's Local Child Poverty Action Plan[12] includes placing Financial Inclusion Support Officers in more schools, and One Parent Families Scotland supporting lone disabled parents and lone parents with a disabled child.

Glasgow City Council (GCC) Financial Inclusion Strategy: aims to increase uptake of Financial Inclusion services by disabled people, lone parents, BAME communities, and those facing in-work poverty in Glasgow[13]. Financial Inclusion support is to be better targeted at disabled people, including disabled parents and parents of disabled children, and aims to be accessible and delivered where disabled people can engage with it.

£2million COVID recovery fund: supports financial inclusion, access to healthy food and responding to the emerging needs of Glasgow's communities.[14]

Social Security Scotland: is already or will soon be delivering three new forms of disability assistance:

- Child Disability Payment (to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Child)
- Adult Disability Payment (to replace Personal Independence Payment (PIP))
- Pension Age Disability Payment (to replace Attendance Allowance).

These have been developed by listening to individuals who have lived experience of the current social security system and organisations representing disabled people, including GDA, through Experience Panels and the Disability and Carers Benefits Expert Advisory Group.

[9] https://fraserofallander.org/mission-not-impossible-how-ambitious-are-the-scottish-governments-child-poverty-targets/
[10] Glasgow's Year 3 Summary Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020/21, p.11
[11] https://www.gov.scot/news/doubling-the-scottish-child-payment/
[12] Glasgow's Year 3 Summary Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020/21
[13] https://glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewSelectedDocument.asp?c=P62AFQDN0GZ3Z3T1T1
[14] https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=26847

Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG): an assurance that no one will fall below a set income level that would allow them to live a dignified life, recognising different needs. MIG is targeted at those on low incomes, and includes other forms of support, beyond cash payments. This is different from a Universal Basic Income (UBI) as UBI is for everyone, even if they are not on a low income. The Scottish Government is committed to commencing work in the current Parliament to provide a MIG for all.[15]

The Fuel Poverty (Scotland) Act 2019: sets statutory targets for reducing fuel poverty, so that by 2040 no more than 5% of households in any local authority should be in fuel poverty.[16]

The 26 May 2021 event sought new thinking and practical interventions on disabled peoples' poverty in Glasgow, drawing on the expertise of those present.
This contributed to a set of practical recommendations, see table page 4.

[15] https://consult.gov.scot/social-security/minimum-income-guarantee/
[16] https://www.gov.scot/policies/home-energy-and-fuel-poverty/fuel-poverty/

5. Evidence on disabled people and employment

The seminal Sayce report on employment support for disabled people (DWP, 2011) noted:

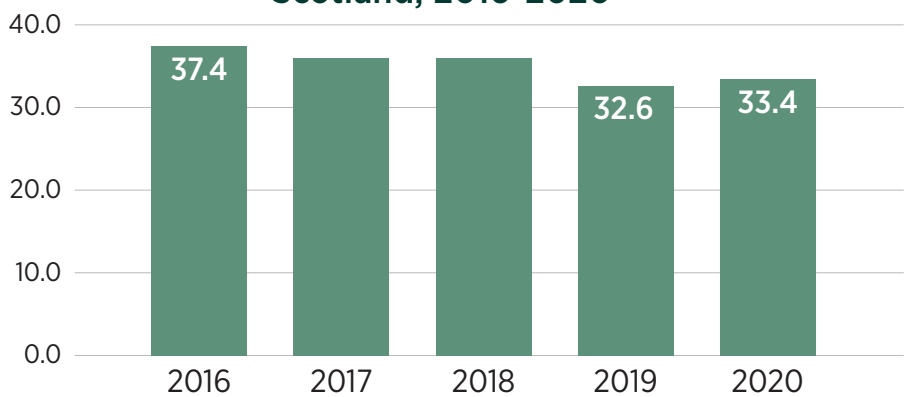
> 'The chance of securing roles across the economy is not just an aspiration – it is a right, recognised in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: the right of disabled people to: *'work on an equal basis with others in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible.'*

There is persistent UK-wide (e.g. PMSU, 2005; JRF, 2022 pp. 57-59), Scottish and Glasgow evidence on the barriers to work experienced by disabled people. There is a disability employment gap, and disabled people in work tend to experience a disability pay gap.

a. Disability employment gap

Disabled people face significant and persistent barriers to getting and keeping a job. In 2020, 80.6% of non-disabled people in Scotland were employed, compared to 47.2% of disabled people.[17] In December 2018 the Scottish Government's 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan' committed to halve the disability employment gap (DEG) by 2038. The DEG is the difference between the employment rates of disabled people and non-disabled people. In order to halve the DEG by 2038 from its 37.4% baseline (2016), Scotland would need a DEG of 18.7%. However, in 2020, the DEG was 33.4%, up from 32.6% in 2019.[18] This is likely due to a greater fall in the employment rate of disabled people than non-disabled people during COVID-19.

Disability Employment Gap (percentage points) Scotland, 2016-2020



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec.

[17] Table 3.1a, Scotland's Labour Market Monthly Briefing – Aug 2021, www.gov.scot/collections/labour-market-statistics/
[18] Table 3.1a, Scotland's Labour Market Monthly Briefing – Aug 2021, www.gov.scot/collections/labour-market-statistics/

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan (2018) set two milestones to help track progress towards halving the DEG: to increase the employment rate of disabled people to 50% by 2023; and to 60% by 2030. The employment rate of disabled people has increased by 4.4% over the last four years, from 42.8% in 2016 to 47.2% in 2020, so starting to reduce the DEG (ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec).

To halve the DEG by 2038 would require an increase of around 130,000 disabled people in employment in Scotland (SG, 2018, p.23). **This requires an increase of approximately 17,300 disabled people in employment in Glasgow by 2038**, given the high proportion of disabled people in the city[19]. A JRF analysis (2021, p.27) indicates how far there is to go:

> 'The Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan: Year 2 – Progress Report (Scottish Government, 2021) notes some progress on closing the disability employment gap but, for example, it shows that only around 3,600 have secured employment via Fair Start Scotland while there are the 100,000 families (with and without children) in poverty where someone is disabled and nobody is in work.'

In 2017 there were fewer than 40,000 disabled people registered unemployed but 321,000 disabled people classed as economically inactive in Scotland (SG, 2018, p.23).[20] Therefore, to meet the Fairer Scotland for Disabled People ambition, there is a need to actively support disabled people currently defined as 'economically inactive' to help them into work.

Retention of disabled people in employment

Preventing economic inactivity also requires more effectively retaining disabled people in employment. Analysis conducted by the Department for Work and Pensions[21] found that disabled people in work in the UK are almost twice as likely to fall out of work as non-disabled people. So, there is a need for employers to more effectively support those who are already in work to be able to remain there and progress. This would include interventions such as implementing reasonable adjustments, using Access to Work (see page 28) effectively, and protecting disabled workers from harassment (e.g. the TUC report that around 7 in 10 disabled women in employment have been sexually harassed at work[22]). The evidence also suggests that Peer Support Networks at work help disabled people to retain and progress in employment, and to reach their full potential (Sayce & Fagelman, 2016) and support employers to improve their disability equality practice (e.g. Scottish Government, 2019b).

[19] Scottish Government analysis of ONS data Jul 2020 – Jun 2021, personal communication, 17 Dec 2021.
[20] Economic inactivity reflects those not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.
[21] Work, Health and Disability Green Paper Data Pack (publishing.service.gov.uk
[22] https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/tuc-survey-7-10-disabled-women-say-theyve-been-sexually-harassed-work?s=09

The impact of COVID-19 on disabled people in the labour market

As noted above, Scotland's DEG widened between 2019 and 2020 from 32.6% to 33.4%. Alongside this, UK survey data (February 2021)[23] showed that during Covid-19, disabled people were more likely to be worried about their health and safety at work than non-disabled people (15% vs 9%), and unable to work due to self-isolation or shielding (7% vs 1%). They were more likely to report being unable to look for work (6% vs 3%). The Social Metrics Commission (2020) found that disabled workers are at a substantially higher risk of being made redundant or having their hours reduced due to the pandemic.

COVID-19 changed some working practices. Increased access to homeworking may prove beneficial to disabled workers in desk-based roles by increasing accessibility of work and supporting job retention. But disabled workers are overrepresented in jobs not conducive to homeworking, and in sectors hardest hit by business closures during the pandemic (Holland, 2021). A greater proportion of disabled people compared with non-disabled people work in Distribution, Hotels & Restaurants[24] – sectors most affected by Covid. So, the position of many disabled workers remains precarious. The **Social Renewal Advisory Board** post-Covid-19 report to Scottish Government (SG, Jan 2021) called for action in five areas to deliver enough money for a decent life from paid work and social security, and to reduce poverty. These included:

- **Public sector employers to initiate a new social contract on Fair Work** to enable people to live well by working, prioritising the needs of those hardest hit by pandemic, including disabled people.

Impairment-specific employment inequalities and intersectional barriers

All disabled people experience barriers to employment, and there is nuance and interaction within and between all impairment types. One sub-group of disabled people experience catastrophically low opportunities for paid work: it is estimated that only 7% of people with learning disabilities in Scotland are in employment (SCLD, 2018). The SCLD TASK Group Report to Scottish Government Ministers on employment for people with learning disabilities in Scotland estimates that as part of reducing the DEG for disabled people by 50%, Scotland would need to see 629 adults with learning disabilities per year entering sustained employment, with Glasgow's contribution being securing sustainable work for 72 people with learning disabilities per year over ten years (SCLD, 2018, pp.11-12).

[23] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/
[24] Scottish Government - Disabled People and the Labour Market in Scotland: 2018

People with mental distress also face specific barriers to getting work and retaining work (e.g. Scottish Association for Mental Health, 2011). This creates a 'vicious cycle' and suggests that people with mental distress need integrated advice to overcome entrenched barriers.[25]

People with multiple protected equality characteristics are also likely to experience more barriers in the labour market. So, disabled people from minority ethnic groups having a lower employment rate (39.8%) than people from minority ethnic groups who are not disabled (62.7%) (SG, 2021, p.34). The employment rate for young disabled people (9.5%) is considerably lower than for non-disabled young people (15.8%) (SG, Dec 2021, p.14).

Self-employment

Self-employment rates are typically higher amongst disabled people than in the wider population, but disabled self-employed people experienced significant problems in surviving the start-up phase and sustaining their business. There is a need for distinct support for disabled entrepreneurs, such as peer mentoring and an information hub for disabled entrepreneurs, alongside examining how well the benefit system supports this group (Adams et al, 2019).

b. Disability pay gap

As seen above, not only are disabled people less likely to have a paid job, but when they do disabled people earn substantially less than their non-disabled peers, even when they have equivalent qualifications. Scotland's disability pay gap widened between 2018 and 2019 (SG, 2021, p.31):

	2016 – Baseline	2017	2018	2019
Disability Pay Gap	13.8%	13.3%	8.3%	16.5%

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2016-2019

In 2019, average pay for disabled employees in Scotland was 16.5% lower than non-disabled employees. This means for every £1 that a non-disabled employee earned in 2019, a disabled employee earned £0.83 on average. This may be because the proportion of disabled people employed in some of the highest paid occupational groups fell between 2018 and 2019 (SG 2021, p.31). This reinforces the importance of job retention to achieving employment equality for disabled people.

[25] https://wearecitizensadvice.org.uk/mental-health-and-employment-a-vicious-circle-74aaea17f644

6. Current policies and levers to change the disability employment gap

There are a range of policies, interventions and sources of support that can contribute to the reduction of the disability employment and pay gaps, some of which were discussed at the 26 May 2021 event.

a. UK/Scotland-wide

'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Employment Action Plan - Progress Report'[26] (SG, 2021) contains multiple, Scotland-wide actions to at least halve the disability employment gap in Scotland by 2038.

Parental Employability Support Fund: delivered in partnership with local authorities to help six priority family groups at greatest risk of child poverty in Scotland, including families with a disabled adult or child, to secure fair work and an increase in their household earnings through tailored, holistic employability support. The Tackling Child Poverty Fund will allocate a further £5 million through PESF to provide support for disabled parents (SG, 2021, p.19).

'No-one Left Behind': a Scotland-wide, locally co-designed, approach to employability, aiming to ensure that all groups experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, including disabled people, are supported to access the right support to move towards, into, and progress within employment. Local authorities need to co-design their approach with other public services, private and third sectors, disabled people, and other beneficiary groups (SG, 2021, pp.17-18). This work is led by a Local Employability Partnership.

Young Person's Guarantee: £60 million Scottish Government investment, launched November 2020 aiming that within two years everyone between the ages of 16-24, including disabled young people, will be able to study; take up an apprenticeship, job or work experience; or participate in formal volunteering (SG, 2021, p.23). Employer-led, with a 'no wrong door' approach, it includes activities to remove disabling barriers.

[26] https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-disabled-people-employment-action-plan-progress-report/pages/2/

Targeted employability interventions: Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and supported employment, which hold particular benefits for people with mental distress and people with learning disabilities respectively, are being strategically reviewed by the Scottish Government (SG, 2021, p.17, p.36).

Access to Work: DWP employment support programme aims to help disabled people enter or stay in work by providing practical and financial support at work. The Sayce report (DWP, 2011) found that for every £1 spent on Access to Work the Exchequer recoups £48, with the social return on the investment even higher. Support can be provided where someone needs help or adaptations beyond reasonable adjustments, and is available to both employees and self-employed people. An Access to Work stakeholder forum for Scotland has now been established, led by DPOs, with Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living as the secretariat, to seek to improve Access to Work delivery in Scotland (SG, 2021, p.4).

Public Social Partnership: led by the Scottish Union of Supported Employment, and known as APT[27], this partnership aims to support employers in the hiring, retaining and ongoing support of disabled employees (SG, 2021, p.14).

Workplace Equality Fund: through WEF 20/21 the Scottish Government is funding four projects specifically focusing on disabled people, delivered by Deaf Action, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL), SUSE and Inclusion Scotland (SG, 2021, p.12).

Fair Work Action Plan: sets out the strategic approach the Scottish Government is taking to help achieve its 2025 vision for Fair Work.[28]

b. Glasgow-specific

Glasgow Local Employability Partnership (LEP): oversees the strategic development and governance of employability and skills in the City. This includes responsibility for designing and delivering No One Left Behind[29] (April 2022-March 2025) through a Local Improvement Action Plan. Glasgow LEP has 17 partners including public services, employer bodies, and education and third sector representatives.

Working Together for a Fairer Glasgow Quality Standard for Employability Services: is being developed and tested by a range of partners in Glasgow in a project led by Glasgow City Council. GDA members have been involved throughout in the co-production of this quality standard.

[27] https://apt.scot/
[28] https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-action-plan/
[29] https://www.gov.scot/publications/no-one-left-behind-delivery-plan/

Glasgow Guarantee: an employability support programme that provides a wage incentive to employers in Glasgow, who recruit from the pool of Glasgow Guarantee-eligible candidates. A network of approved Employability Provider partners support people to apply.[30] Only individuals who are work ready and are being supported by an approved Employability Provider (such as GDA) can register to apply for Glasgow Guarantee vacancies. Employers who are registered with the Glasgow Guarantee must agree to interview all disabled candidates who meet the minimum entry requirements specified for the job vacancy.

Glasgow City Council Equality Outcomes 2021-2025[31]: The GCC plan to fulfil its Equality Act 2010 public sector general equality duty towards people with protected characteristics, including disabled people. This requires public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. Outcomes include:

- **Outcome 1** – More women, black and minority ethnic people, younger people, disabled people and LGBTI+ are supported to enter employment or training.

- **Outcome 8** – Black and minority ethnic people and disabled people have increased representation within Glasgow City Council's workforce.

Social Security Scotland have committed to providing over 2,000 jobs between Glasgow and Dundee, with a commitment to increasing diversity to reflect the population they serve, including disabled people.[32] SSS have delivered candidate information workshops to GDA members to increase their prospects of making a successful application.

The 26 May 2021 event itself sought new thinking and practical interventions in Glasgow, drawing on the expertise of those present. **This contributed to a set of practical recommendations, see table, page 4.**

[30] https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/glasgowguarantee
[31] https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17530
[32] https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/news-events/news/first-minister-announces-2-000-new-jobs-in-economic-boost-for-dundee-and-glasgow

7. Evidence from co-design event and related activities with disabled people

Held by Zoom on 26th May 2021, the half-day co-design event was attended by 69 people, including elected members, disabled people, DPO representatives, public service and health officers, and third sector organisations.

The event itself sought new thinking and practical interventions to resolve disabled peoples' poverty and the Disability Employment Gap in Glasgow, drawing on the expertise of those present. It was chaired by Jim McCormick, CEO of The Robertson Trust, an independent funder with a ten-year strategy focused on getting to grips with the root causes and consequences of poverty and trauma in Scotland.
Jim introduced the event:

> '... if we were trying to summarise what the challenge is, I think it's ... closing the gap between good intentions and the experiences people have day-to-day in their lives. We know, for disabled people in Glasgow, higher poverty rate, lower employment rate, even controlling for qualifications and skills, disabled people pay a premium. So well-qualified disabled people are more likely to be earning less or unemployed than their counterparts who are similarly qualified but not disabled.'

Participants watched a short film demonstrating lived experiences of disabled people living in poverty and seeking work, and then split into five discussion groups, each focusing on these questions:

Discussion #1: Where do we want to be?

- What works? Reflecting on good experiences and examples of what works for disabled people in relation to tackling poverty and work/employment?
- Disabled people are increasingly a priority group for many programmes/ services / policy drivers.
  - What are the opportunities to provide support to disabled people to address their poverty and unemployment?
  - What are the challenges in engaging and supporting disabled people?

Discussion #2: How do we get there?

- What are the blockages and enablers to achieving change, building on what works?
- What are our 3 key recommendations? What actions should we take to make sure that disabled people benefit from the programmes/ services/ policies intended to address their poverty and unemployment?

Poverty and work are linked: barriers to getting and retaining a job make out-of-work poverty more likely. One story captured how anyone can become a disabled person, and the complicated barriers that can then arise when seeking work:

> 'I had an accident … All the jobs I had before were physical, manual, lifting. Fast food places. They're not going to be wanting a wheelchair user. So, I don't know where I can go looking for a job… I was told to get some advice … Because I was house bound, the first person I got said it was a six-month wait for anyone to come … by that point everything piled on top of itself [and] I didn't know where to start to explain to this person what the need was. When I was trying to say that I was looking for a job, it wasn't any more and I was looking to get out of the house because I'm now trapped… You wouldn't believe I have an honours degree… I can never see me working again. It's no longer: How can I get to work? It's now crisis management …'

The themes below are drawn from analysis of the notes from the 26 May 2021 group discussions. The discussions mainly focused on barriers to employment for disabled people. Additional evidence on poverty is drawn from notes taken at a consultation with disabled people about social security to inform JRF research (2021). We also held a Zoom session with BAME disabled people in October 2021 in order to better understand their experiences of both employment and poverty. The below themes complement those found above, and together these result in a set of practical recommendations (see table, page 4). In the discussion groups, people made points which exemplify the themes. These are quoted anonymously.

a. Closing the Disability Employment Gap

Seven themes emerged on tackling the Disability Employment Gap.

i. Tackle long-term structural barriers and disabling attitudes that pre-date Covid-19

Participants talked about longstanding stereotypes and assumptions about disabled people, in society, and including by employers, which perpetuate the Disability Employment Gap.

A group member identified how prejudice can play out, even in apparently positive policy circumstances: *'disabled people are guaranteed job interviews, which might be seen as an enabler but without training the interviewer can still hold negative attitudes and people are still less likely to get the job.'* Another said: *'Businesses are afraid to employ disabled people – because of how the public think … there's a lot of stigma. We need to encourage a culture of how to meet access needs, for example BSL interpreter, taxis.'* A GCC Councillor talked about assumptions about high costs of employing disabled people:

> 'as soon as somebody mentions that you've got a disability an employer backs away, saying this will cost a lot of money if we employ somebody like this. It's not true. Small reasonable adjustments will suit the majority of disability people, which doesn't cost a lot of money.'

A representative from GCIL, discussing their successful Graduate Professional Career programme[33], identified how barriers to work push disabled people back into unnecessary education:

> '… what we find … is a majority of the participants come with lop-sided CVs. They get overqualified. They come out of uni or college, they cannot get into the jobs they need. They go back to college or uni, get more qualifications. They end up with qualifications, no experience.'

He reiterated the wasted talent of well-qualified disabled people: *'The graduate programme actually came through a demand … We were getting loads of graduates telling us they were long-term unemployed … people with Ph.D.'s who have been unemployed for six years.'*

Disablism was even experienced by participants at places that should help people find work:

> 'At the job centre, before I went on to the support group, they said you have to go on this training thing to get back to work … After two times going, they said, 'Don't bother coming back. You're too disabled. We can't do anything for you' … I didn't think I was too disabled. I could've got something … They have to be monitored to make sure they're fit for purpose.'

[33] http://www.gcil.org.uk/equality-academy/employment-opportunities-for-disabled-graduates.aspx

Tressa Burke, Chief Executive of GDA highlighted best practice in tackling these barriers:

> 'Barriers can be removed but impairments are part of everyday life … One of the things that works at GDA is we never ask people what their condition or impairment is. We ask people, what are your barriers? How can we help you take part? What can we do to make things better for you? Anyway, the same condition for two different people has different consequences. Concentrating on the removal of barriers is one thing we could do.'

One discussion group suggested a human rights approach to tackle structural discrimination:

> 'People felt they wanted to be seen as human beings in a holistic way with lots of different concerns and needs. To frame any work around human rights and enshrine human rights in law and for there to be redress.'

Scotland is working towards integrating the UNCRPD into law, Article 27 of which includes the right of disabled people to work[34]. To halve the Disability Employment Gap in Glasgow, employers in the City need to challenge and remove physical and attitudinal barriers.

ii. Take a 'holistic' approach, removing barriers outwith the workplace.

As much as what happens within the actual workplace, disabled people may require support to be able to get to work, and then need to be able to earn sufficient income to cover the extra living costs that disabled people generally experience. Jim McCormick (introducing) said:

> '… [we] focus today on what it will take to decisively drive down poverty and therefore, for disabled people, what it means for the job market, our skills system, everything that goes around enabling people to get and keep good jobs. It's about the housing contribution, the care contribution. And how we deal with the costs that disabled people face over and above others.'

[34] UNCRPD Article 27 states: 'States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.'

A representative from GCIL drew on their experience of supporting disabled people to get work:

> 'It is important that we recognise how interrelated some of these barriers are and that we have to really take a holistic approach … You can help somebody with … confidence building, qualifications and preparation for work… It is not going to serve anybody particularly well if they can't get out of their house to get there. Or if the charging policies are such that it is not in their interests to gain extra income because it is taken away from them because of their disability-related costs.'

Interlinking poverty and work, Jim McCormick asked the question:

> 'With some disability benefits coming to Scotland, how can we better wrap that core support around transport and housing and our approach to social care, different levels of the system?'

Another 'holistic' element is the need to increase confidence in social security and make work pay. At the event, people wanted to know, *'will volunteering or working affect my benefits; can I enter a short-term job and revert to benefits if it doesn't work out?'* One workshop noted: *'It feels like such a gamble to come off of your benefits once you've had to fight really hard to get them in the first place.'* Uncertainty over social security rules make it hard for people to escape poverty through employment (see also IPPR Scotland, 2021, pp. 26-27).

The event discussed how to improve social security to secure decent income levels. A disabled person noted how hard it can be to get out of poverty through gaining employment:

> 'I had an opportunity to get a job, but after doing the benefits check, I'd just be £3 better off each week. They should say employers need to pay a living wage so it's worth them coming off the benefits. Are you going to come off it for £3 a week extra?'

The contradictions between receiving social security and wanting to work were also highlighted at the JRF consultation event:

> 'When I applied for Universal Credit, the attitude was almost like ah you are disabled but you want to work? … I felt like I was almost being punished for being disabled and wanting to work.'

> 'You are either able to work or too sick to work and you need benefits – there is no in-between space.'

'A universal basic income, with add-on's for disability costs, could remove the stigma of having to claim benefits and would change the culture and shift attitudes.'

There remains an underlying attitude that disabled people can't or shouldn't work. Instead, employers, public services, employability services and social security all need to work in harmony – holistically – to enable disabled people to work and earn sufficiently to account for their extra costs and their support needs.

iii. Maximise control by disabled people over their employability support.

Employability programmes offer support to people experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, including disabled people, to enable them to move towards, into, and progress in employment. In Scotland, local authorities, through a Local Employability Partnership, co-design their approach to employability with other public services, private and third sectors, disabled people, and other beneficiary groups (SG, 2021, pp.17-18). The co-design event found that disabled people need **(a)** more power over how they access employability support, **(b)** more choice and flexibility of employability provider, **(c)** employability support to adapt for changing life circumstances and impairments over time, **(d)** a clearer focus on achieving employment outcomes. These are consistent with independent living principles of choice and control.

(a) accessing employability support

How difficult it is for a disabled job seeker to find and navigate the support that's out there? A disabled participant told his story:

'... when people acquire an impairment ... it is very difficult to come off the starting blocks. There's ... big gaps in your knowledge i.e. independent travel, can I relearn and uptake technology... Six years down the road, having acquired my brain injury, the additional impairments I already had, there's nobody there to help me plug that gap ... when I tried to access services in my area they claimed they were all-seeing, all-doing, all-dancing, the reality was there was that big gap. I was being asked to be an unpaid consultant to help them solve that ... [after] four years, I just wrote myself off. I genuinely came to the conclusion I was unemployable, I was done and dusted and society had passed me by ... where I live, there is still nothing. I visit the projects every year and they still cannot help me build that bridge...'

In terms of solutions for improving access to employment-related services, different groups recommended a 'no wrong door approach' or 'one door' approach for disabled jobseekers, to 'make the process of accessing support easier – as it stands people feel they have to jump through hoops.' A senior GCC participant made a strategic suggestion about services taking responsibility for transport costs:

> '... should there be more onus on organisations inviting people to appointments to check they can get there and be more proactive around that. From time to time we've done it ourselves when we're organised events, we've arranged taxis. We recognise people don't have money in the first place to get there, to be reimbursed. We can be doing more to take stress out of important appointments for people. It's not easy to get around Glasgow on buses.'

One group noted that some employability services did not fit the diversity of disabled people:

> 'Contact with employability is silo'ed. It's for people with physical disability / mental health conditions / addictions. There needs to be awareness that a person might have a physical impairment, learning difficulty, mental health condition, and autism.'

People were fed up with being passed between agencies and wanted a new approach:

> 'One other thing about working with different agencies is around being passed from one person to the next. So, yes, a programme that involves not saying: Well, you have that condition, you come here. You have that condition, you go there. But to see the person.'

(b) choice and flexibility of employability provider

In terms of tackling inflexibility in the employability system, a GCC worker highlighted the Public Social Partnership (see page 28) which aims to help employers to better support disabled employees:

> 'I know that's a year's work and we're only a couple of months into that, but maybe a Glasgow focus around that might be hopeful and, again, make use of the funds that we have at our disposal ... It feels quite daunting, but let's do a few things right here, right now but with a view to the future because we do have an opportunity now to design what employability can look like from 2023 onwards. It should be more individually tailored and focused and meet the needs of people rather than the needs of the funders and the targets of the funders.'

A GCC worker described how funding being held by organisations can hold people back:

> '... there has been a lot of money coming to the council under 'No-one Left Behind' ... but it is quite prescriptive ... [T]here's a significant amount of money through the Parental Employability Support Fund but it has to be for unemployed disabled parents rather than a more general disabled person approach. So, if you are not a parent with a young child under 16 who is in poverty you can't access that funding. That's what we need to move away from because it is about what does the individual need and we'll set the funding to follow that.'

(c) the nature of employability support

A participant suggested a 'case management' approach to employability to increase accountability and reduce the all-too-common experience for disabled people of having to repeat their stories to new professionals:

> 'I'm a bit of a pain in the arse to people because I will take notes: 'on this day at this time I spoke to' ... if I didn't have that, I wouldn't be able to go, 'wait a minute, I was told' ... there's no accountability ... it would be nice that when I go to speak to somebody, I get to speak to the same person. That' I'm not having to keep going over the same story every time.'

A public service employee noted a potential model for how to personalise funding for employability:

> '... this idea of does the funding go to the individuals or does it go to the companies? So if it goes to the individuals, then they can pick and choose what is more suitable for themselves. There has been precedent set with that through the individual learning accounts. There is a model there. The amounts that get distributed could be altered but there is systems and processes in place with that.'

One workshop suggested that employability services would ideally be integrated with benefits advice: *'Lots of employability is not compatible with benefits. Employability services should include benefits advice too.'*

(d) outcomes from employability interventions

Gaining secure employment is what disabled people want. A councillor at the event noted two successful small-scale employability initiatives:

> 'When I first became a Councillor ... I spoke to the director of Glasgow Housing Association [name]. I said I know you have 50 apprentices every year, can you put in some with disabilities? He said 10 percent. In the first year he done it, it was 16.5 percent.'

'... Project Search[35] have young adults with learning difficulties, including autism and Asperger's, I met with them just last week. What an amazing bunch of guys. Their problem, again, is getting employment. So I spoke to the head of [GCC] HR. They're anything to try to arrange placements then, hopefully, eventually jobs. But we need things like that within the Council.'

A representative from GCIL talked about Open Door, their employability programme for disabled people:

'The [programme] is run by disabled people for disabled people. Everything is underpinned by social model principles. And it is sharing that experience within the workplace to try and influence employers to change how they actually view disability ... and change how they do things in term of employment.'

Operating for over twenty years, Open Door has supported over 600 disabled people and worked with over 200 employers. Whilst successful, Open Door has been able to support an average of thirty disabled people a year, and to work with an average of ten employers a year. As the GCIL representative noted: *'it does not change employers' attitudes or their policies and practices.'*[36] Larger initiatives and new, mainstreaming approaches are needed to decisively influence the mass of employers.

The event discussed how to achieve the transformation from small, successful employability initiatives to large-scale, mainstreamed improvements. One group asked the question:

'... a lot of these very successful programmes and interventions, by the nature of the funding are quite limited in terms of the number of people that they can support. So how do we support, if you like, mainstream employability providers ... to provide employability services that are better placed to meet the needs of disabled people?'

Radically different approaches are needed to get work for the thousands of disabled people that closing the Disability Employment Gap demands, in Glasgow alone. Mainstream 'employerability' work is needed beyond employability programmes.

[35] https://www.glasgowclyde.ac.uk/courses/563-nq-dfn-project-search-nhs-based-at-glasgow-royal-infirmary/2981

[36] Small-scale employer impact also applies to the Workplace Equality Fund (Impact Report. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Good for Business https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/inrpzcvz/wef_final_impact-report-2021.pdf) which has funded 58 projects, involving 290+ businesses (2018-2021) costing £1.86m (p.13). In terms of employment outcomes for disabled people, in that time only three businesses employed more people from priority groups, and three businesses had people from priority groups promoted (p.27).

iv. Change employers' practices at scale: 'employerability'.

Employerability is a concept that arose at the 2018 summit of disabled people to inform the Scottish Government's work to reduce the Disability Employment Gap, leading to the Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Employment Action Plan (SG, 2018). Employerability is the ability of an employer to welcome disabled people as equal and valued employees and support their growth and development in the workplace. This changes the focus away from employability support directed at disabled job seekers - as if they were the problem to be fixed - and towards supporting employers to better implement best practice in the recruitment and retention of disabled people.

At the 26 May 2021 event, a GCIL representative described how in response to the large number of unemployed disabled graduates, GCIL devised a Graduate Professional Careers programme, placing a disabled graduate within each of the NHS boards in Scotland: *'We've had 45 people complete that programme and 43 have progressed into further employment, 65 percent within the NHS or Scottish Government.'* A GDA representative noted: *'the Graduate Programme where they have a disabled person on every NHS board in Scotland is fantastic. Obviously, employment leads to more than just money for people. It is a wonderful programme.'*

However, GCIL added that demand for the programme was overwhelming:

> '... we're massively oversubscribed ... we can only take about 20 percent of the people out there. That's a hard message to tell people when they are experiencing disadvantage, rejection and loss of confidence.'

Like Open Door, the Graduate Programme is still too small to substantially affect the Disability Employment Gap, so GCIL is now doing more 'employerability' work with NHS Boards:

> 'That has led on to us working directly with employers to try to influence change within their policy and practice... the NHS boards at the moment, we're reviewing how they do things in terms of recruitment and employment [and] reasonable adjustments... But linking that back to the strategic level documentation, and how they go about developing the policy. Because ... that's where the real change will be. If you are going to achieve real inclusivity for disabled people, the attitude, the structure of policy-making and strategy development has to be underpinned by the needs of disabled people through what we would argue is the social model of disability.'

A GCC employee considered a means to increase funding to expand the number of jobs/programmes for disabled people, whilst also working with mainstream employers:

> '... it might be here and now that we can add to the programmes like [GCIL] has already described that are working well, that are oversubscribed, so we can get that money out the door, towards those projects and people right now. But, definitely, mindful of the approach of a long-term approach to working with employers across the board. We're having that ongoing discussion with HR at Glasgow City Council ...'

A DPO representative gave an example of lack of employerability, in terms of sharing examples of good practice to encourage disabled people to apply for public service jobs:

> 'We have been doing work with Glasgow City Council HR. What surprised me is how much good practice there was, but people don't necessarily know about it. The good practice was unshared across the teams. [W]e need to do more to highlight and demonstrate where there is good practice around supporting disabled people in the workplace. That, clearly, was happening within Glasgow... You wouldn't know it by looking at the Glasgow City website if you were a [disabled] candidate.'

People talked about the problems that continued in terms of support at the workplace. A DPO representative said: *'... really good practice is when there's long-term support that's sustained and individualised.'* This would allow for career development. However, Access to Work grants, which are intended to help employers retain disabled people, were seen as limiting this. An employer said:

> 'I have a person who has been employed with us for quite some time ... Access to Work only supports any training they require for their current job... So, effectively that employee is trapped. They are not able to do the development stuff that other peers would.'

Access to Work was debated across the groups. One group said: *'Access to Work great when works but doesn't start until in employment – need support to get into employment.'* Another group said: *'The Access to Work scheme covers cost of these barriers - PA's/access equipment/transport etc - but is not always known about or easy to access.'* A third group said: Access to Work was *'... cloudy, confused, should be more supportive. Employability providers should be offering support with Access to Work negotiations.'*

Being set up with inclusive technology at work was another barrier to mainstream employment. A DPO employee said: *'There's a few people that come into administrative technology and it's taken 18 months to get set up. We have another member who … was almost being bullied in the workplace in the NHS for asking for systems … she moved roles and it happened again.'* There were exceptions: *'Being a visually impaired person, I'm employed by GDA. I'm lucky in that I have are got accessible technology to help guide me through my job.'*

Disability equality training for employers was also a vital part of employerability. A DPO representative said:

> '… we feel people need disability equality training, as opposed to disability awareness training … explaining to employers what the social model [of disability] means and how that's applied in the policies … that can only come from engagement with disabled people-led organisations.'

The big picture also needs to include horizon-scanning for the growing, sustainable employers with quality jobs in Glasgow. Employers' obligations to employ disabled people need to be tightened and disabled people better supported to get their share of these opportunities. Jim McCormick suggested target-setting in growth areas:

> 'As we hopefully reopen [from Covid-19], gradually and safely, we are going to see where new patterns of job growth are coming. Wherever the investment is flowing, it is so important we have an equality lens with an ambitious target on all of that.'

A 'one-stop shop' or hub for Glasgow was suggested to advise and support mainstream employers to employ disabled people. A GCIL representative suggested a route:

> 'There has been work done by the Scottish Government in terms of 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' … It is an opportunity for user-led opportunities, like three [DPOs] work together to develop a hub … for employers to go to when they need support to meet changes within their workplaces - to ensure that their policy and practices are inclusive and fully accessible to all disabled people.'

Participants in our BAME disabled people Zoom session highlighted a need for more support for entrepreneurship and self-employment by disabled people. It may be that an employerability hub, perhaps with allies such as Business Gateway and Princes Trust, can also advise disabled people on setting up their own businesses.

Another benefit of an employerability hub would be to support employers to retain disabled people that are already in work. Jim McCormick noted: *'one of the biggest risks [is] the rate at which disabled people often drop out of work for sometimes preventable reasons... it is important we are thinking about maintaining what we've got as well as building out from there ...'* A participant working in inclusive employment and training, gave an example of successfully maintaining employment:

> 'It's working with adults on all of their spectrum. I have personal experience of a family member who was working at a factory. He developed blindness. He was getting progressively more blind. They hired "eyes" for him, basically, and a PA, and that allowed him to do his work safely.'

Developing a Glasgow employerability hub led by DPOs to support mainstream employers to recruit and retain disabled workers is a practical action to help mainstream employers across the City to make their contribution to reducing the DEG. It could also support disabled people with setting up their own businesses.

v. Account for the extra costs faced by disabled people.

As seen in Section 3 above, disabled people have higher costs than non-disabled people. At 26 May 2021 event, a person with a visual impairment described their extra costs for I.T:

> 'Even after four years I was nowhere near saving up enough money not just to buy a laptop but to buy JAWS, the screen reading software. That software, when I priced it four years ago, was nearly £1,600 – and a decent laptop to run that.'

Many examples of extra costs were also highlighted at the JRF consultation event:

> 'The costs of ... buying software or hardware to allow you to live more independently, means you risk going into debt... Getting an accessible microwave costs £160. On Universal Credit you can't meet the costs to live independently.'

> 'I am in a lot of debt because I've had to buy a lot of equipment for my visual disability ... I've had to spend thousands of pounds on equipment. Recently I had to get a new TV that has voiceover built in. Torches, headlamps, batteries that I need to buy cost hundreds of pounds and there is equipment that I would like to have but I have to do without.'

> '... my condition is progressive so I now need to use taxis. A taxi to Tesco costs me £40 for a return trip.'

'... a powered wheelchair cost £12,000 – it's like buying a car! Disabled people are coerced into having to buy expensive equipment where the prices are not controlled and you have no choice of provider.'

'Cooking takes a lot of energy or can be too painful so I end up spending a lot of money on pre-packaged vegetables, pre-sliced fruit, that sort of thing. These cost a lot more.'

A DPO representative noted: *'there's a specific issue here about people getting service technology to get them to sustained employment ... it's not enough to know what is available but how can you afford to buy it if you are on a low income.'*

This all means that disabled people need to be able to gain and retain work that has decent pay. It also means that work-and-benefits packages need to be integrated. Together these mean that disabled people can financially gain from employment in an equal way to everyone else, taking into account their higher costs.

vi. Involve DPOs and people with lived experience in designing, delivering, and commissioning inclusive employment projects, and guiding high-level policy.

Glasgow's Quality Standard for Employability Services, co-produced with disabled people, was cited as good practice for inclusive policy development. Tressa Burke, GDA, argued that **specialist "know -how"** is needed not just to co-produce or co-design but also to deliver vital insights and to support disabled people, whilst mainstreaming accessibility responsibilities:

'From a funding point of view, you need your specialist projects that do have expertise and understanding ... organisations led by disabled people, you need them. You also need accessibility in the other areas as well, so that disabled people can access more mainstream services. The idea of breaking down silo working and working together is fabulous. The ... unintended consequence might be everyone work with GDA and GDA will pay for it. But our access budget is to enable people to take part in GDA activities, not others'. The answer isn't to put the burden on a wee organisation; it's to widen it out. You need both. And the specialist equality organisations can help with training and raising awareness of what needs done, too.'

Another DPO lead noted: *'... organisations being of disabled people for disabled people ... are the ones that are going to know what the barriers are and what needs done. When disabled people are asked and listened to, what are their hopes, ambitions, their needs.'*

A representative from Social Security Scotland concurred:

> 'User panels have been really beneficial for us to shape up our services. It's been a good opportunity for staff to get a greater learning too, because we go along and do a lot of the scribing. It helps if people who are going to be part of the service come and hear. It's a really good way to look at things afresh, look at the people [with] lived experiences.'

A DPO staff member explained the necessity of disabled peoples' involvement from the outset:

> 'Part of the reason that our Lifeline was so successful at GDA was because we involved our members from the start. We asked them what they need and how we could support them in getting that. When it comes to funding, if we involve the people who this directly affects, in the design of the projects, it's got to be a success from the start … It's all right for people to sit in an office and say, 'This is what we should fund.' But unless they know and understand the real needs of people on the ground, how can this be wholly effective?

Disabled people and DPOs need to be involved as allies to support public and private sector employers, and the Local Employment Partnership, to get employability and employerability interventions right for all disabled people.

vii. Assume diversity amongst disabled people.

The 26 May 2021 event included people with learning disabilities, mental distress, physical impairments, sensory impairments, and combinations of impairments. There is nuance and interaction within and between all impairment types. Diversity amongst disabled people necessitates a degree of personalisation to employment interventions. There are also particular employment inequalities in terms of age and ethnicity, and particular regard is needed for people with learning disabilities. The 26 May event discussed disabled peoples' diversity. Jim McCormick talked about older disabled people:

> 'It cannot be the case that we, even unwittingly, have in our programmes an unspoken rule of writing people off because of their age and because they are deemed too disabled or because services aren't equipped to provide straightforward adaptations.'

Older people are more likely to be disabled people, so securing employment and tackling poverty needs to support disabled people through the lifecourse. A disabled person said: *'It is good that the council are doing all these new schemes for the young ones … but there's never any work for people aged 55 or over. If you are over that age, on disability, you have no chance of getting a job.'*

Retention of older disabled workers can be harmed because acquired impairments go unrecognised. A representative from a Deaf peoples' organisation said:

'… we know there's a lot of people who become unemployed or underemployed often through undiagnosed hearing problems but what is seen in the workplace is mental health issues, depression, anxiety, where people are not coping with the pace of communication.'

In terms of younger disabled people, a DPO representative talked about work they had done on transitions in early working life:

'… people were describing they got good support at school, they didn't get just as good support in college or university and by the time they got to the workforce any support was so diluted it was hardly worth having … we need to manage those transitions. Because we can see these people coming.'

A DPO representative noted that the FE or college sector were also *'a key player'* in terms of ensuring young disabled people can progress careers: *'Money goes into colleges to support disabled people … we need to do more to make sure it is not just supporting people into college, it is supporting people … into post-college destinations.'*

A GCC attendee said more nuance was needed when supporting employment for young disabled people: *'We would suggest that that support would go to those who are furthest removed, not just a kind of global "young person" approach.'*

BAME disabled people can face additional employment discrimination (DWP, 2011, p.37, p.42). Where there is more than one protected characteristic the barriers multiply exponentially (GCPH/CRER, 2021). Participants in our BAME disabled people Zoom session suggested that there needed to be far more engagement between DPOs and large employers like GCC and the NHS to support them into work. They suggested that employment discrimination was so problematic that there was a case for promoting a quota:

'[DPOs] could forward our CVs and so on… for we to do it ourselves it is hard, I'm going through a lot of jobcentres, but is not easy. The attitude is there from us, but it is hard for employers to get to know us. Let's have our quota!'

Reducing the disability employment gap, and achieving human rights and equal opportunities post-Covid is also about creating employment opportunities for those disabled people who face the greatest barriers to entering the labour market such as people with learning disabilities and people with long-term mental distress.
A workshop member noted:

> 'Something we haven't touched on in our discussion is the specific challenges and issues around certain types [of impairment]. People with learning issues face significant barriers, prejudice, so on. So [supporting employment] has to be able to be delivered in a specific way they mix in specific groups as well. That's something we need to build into this.'

Both employability and employerability need to take a personalised approach, and disability equality training by DPOs needs to take an approach that reflects the diversity of disabled people.

b. Ending poverty for disabled people

The poverty experienced by disabled people arises from a range of structural barriers that prevent them from having sufficient income to meet the additional costs they face. A participant at 26 May 2021 event described the experience of being thrown into poverty after becoming a disabled person:

> 'I was a very active person. All of a sudden, I'm a non-active person, I'm not fit to go to work … how to find out what money I'm allowed to get, it was such a steep learning curve. It was like the Himalayas to me. I didn't know who to ask. Those I asked didn't seem to know what to do with me… A month after my accident, I became homeless as well … It was so difficult … one of Shelter's solicitors got on to my case and they were great. They took the weight from me… There seems to be so many obstructions put in your way just to get what you're entitled to … I want somewhere I can live, that allows me to be able to get to some places like a library, or a shop … I'm not wanting the Earth. I just want to be seen as human. To be honest, the way I've been treated, had I been an animal, I would've been taken away from the owner…'

Another participant described the degrading way in which poverty interacts with disability for her:

> 'I've had to cancel a few [appointments] with my pain management clinic before COVID. It's fair enough you get your bus fare back when you get there, but sometimes you don't have [the money] at the time. My disability, with needing the toilets, I've been three times on the bus and not made it. Just to get an appointment. If you don't go for all your other appointments, you end up getting worse and then you're back in hospital, just for maybe not having £3.50. ([name] became upset).'

A DPO representative responded: *'If people were given better benefits, they wouldn't be worried about how much the bus cost. They'd have plenty to get between appointments. Give people the money they need.'*

As seen in Section 3 above, the extra costs faced by disabled people adds to their risk of poverty. Reinforcing this, Tressa Burke (GDA) noted:

> 'Disabled people are three times more likely to live in poverty and to face food insecurity as nondisabled people and face extra costs. Sometimes of over £1,000 a month. These include charges for care and support. Our own survey [GDA, 2020] showed 57% of our members were worried about money and hardship, 47 percent worried about food and essentials.

Living on benefits also demands too much form-filling and complication, as a disabled participant described:

> 'We're fed up with filling in the same information. It's like people are trying to trick us … It's got to stop. It drives me nuts. To the point where I've not gone for things because I've known it means form-filling. And it leads to a cycle for myself of depression and anxiety. Because even when I know there's a form I have to fill coming up … I know this brown envelope is going to land. I've avoided the front door because I know the postie's been … We're in the age of computers … I know some agencies aren't allowed to share with others. But surely that's just one form you share that says, 'share my information, please.''

Jim McCormick noted: *'That theme of feeling passed from pillar to post comes through really strongly from so much work about poverty.' Creating a 'no-wrong door'* culture was also a JRF priority recommendation for Scotland to tackle poverty (2021, p.48).

There is also a long history of having to 'prove yourself' in terms of social security benefits. As one group put it: *'people feel scared to express their genuine needs, worried something else will be taken away.'* A Social Security Scotland representative discussed potential new approaches in Scotland:

> 'The whole benefits journey is a minefield. People in this group are more aware of it than I am… From my point of view with Social Security Scotland, we want to maximise benefit uptake and make sure people are getting what they're entitled to.'

One group said that disabled people needed clear, coherent information on the Social Security Scotland policy and what people are entitled to. Another group suggested a need for more access to Welfare Rights Officers *'in as many places as possible – disabled people shouldn't be hunting for them'* and offering flexible ways to contact them – a mix of face to face, phone and online access (e.g. Zoom).

Disabled people need completely accessible welfare rights and benefits advice. DPOs showed how accessibility and removing barriers could be transformational when 'baked in' rather than 'bolted on'. A DPO employee gave an example:

> 'I work for the Rights Now! project for GDA. I've worked for other agencies across the city. I've really learned since I started working at GDA, if you really focus on accessibility, the amount of people who are able to turn up to their appointments shoots through the roof... Giving people home visits if they require it and covering their transport if they require it too. It's really rare that I have an appointment with somebody and they don't show up. But in previous jobs, that's been much higher. It shows that if you focus on accessibility, that's the best thing to do ... it's something that can slip without people realising.'

Welfare rights advisers explained how they sought to reduce barriers. A CAB advice manager gave an example:

> '... we need to listen and we need to be accessible to everybody. A small example – one chap came to our front desk one day. He was almost ready for a fight, because he'd experienced 'no' everywhere else he had gone. He was deaf and partially sighted and he wanted a note-taker. Everywhere else he had gone said 'We can't do that. We don't have funding for that. We can get a sign language interpreter, but we can't give you what you want.' He was all het up ... I said, I've not experienced that before, but let me get advice ... And I said, 'Yep we can offer that service. We can't do it for a week, but we can do it for you.' What a change in a person... We didn't have particular funding for that thing, but it was just matter of, this is a person in our community, he needs advice on benefits, and he needs it in a way he can understand. Sometimes it's just about listening.'

Another CAB worker described how they improved accessibility to their anti-poverty advice:

> '... [we] did some focus group work with different client groups to see what people wanted and what they needed ... all different people with all different barriers. What would make it easier for them to visit us ... That's partly why we moved premises. We're opening up different hours. Drop-in, we were finding people with mental health conditions, was too much ... 20-odd people in a queue, all squashed into a waiting room. We offered late night appointments, quiet areas. It's tough, but I think we need to listen and we need to be accessible to everybody.'

However, reducing barriers to welfare rights access for disabled people was not consistent:

> 'Last week I was making a referral for someone to another service. It was someone we'd been using an interpreter with, no bother. The other organisation said, 'We can't provide an interpreter. We don't have a budget for that.' Sometimes there are different access needs and they just think 'We can't do that.' It's almost acceptable to think 'We can't meet that access need', rather than thinking about how to get around that barrier. Encouraging a culture of making it normal to think about how you're going to meet people's access needs. It seems simple, but it's not always how people think about it.'

DPOs have the 'know-how' to remove - not just reduce - barriers to advice services from the outset, so that inclusion of disabled people is 'baked in'. Allies can learn from their practice.

In terms of intersectional barriers, a participant in our BAME disabled peoples' Zoom session said: *'We don't want sympathy from anyone, but we need government to get us out of poverty so we can stand on our own.'* Another participant highlighted potential language barriers for older BAME disabled people and the stigma of discussing poverty: *'the biggest information may be word-of-mouth, but this means people talking about being poor!'* How to use ipads and needing to use the internet to claim benefits were also potential barriers for this older group. The Well multicultural resource centre was cited as a rare resource for appropriate support in Glasgow[37].

Alternative approaches to tackling poverty, such as Minimum Income Guarantee (see page 22) were discussed. A councillor argued:

> 'For many people, there's still a stigma around being on benefits and having to claim them. If it's a guaranteed income, then everyone has a standard of living that allows them some dignity … There should be additional funding for people with extra needs, whether that's disabled people, folk with children … we're at a time where society accepts that things have to change.'

A disabled person added:

> 'I think that would be great if there was a minimum for everybody. It's subjective though, because I'm somebody who because of pain, heating is important. So what one person needs to heat their home isn't what somebody else needs to heat their home. Some people need other equipment. There's a lot of different things involved within that.'

[37] https://thewell.org.uk/

A DPO welfare rights worker responded:

> 'What [name] is saying is a good point... As long as you had extra things available for people with extra needs, that's really important ... As long as it wasn't too low. Like how working tax credits allowed employers to pay poverty wages. If it's a low rate, it can just subside poor employers, rather than lifting people out of poverty.'

Reducing disabled peoples' poverty means higher benefits, fully accounting for extra costs, alongside a vision for a post-poverty future. **It requires a Glasgow Disability Poverty Reduction Plan.**

c. Accountability and measuring changes in poverty and employment for disabled people in Glasgow

One workshop asked the question: *'How will we know we are making progress?'* They suggested needing a body to be accountable for this, such as Audit Scotland, or another improvement service or framework to scrutinise and check behind the statistics to tell the story of social impact and connection with disabled peoples' lived experience.: *'... the numbers, they don't tell the whole story and we need to be looking at ... the social impact on people and the health impact on people of services and support they are receiving.'* Glasgow's progress with reducing the DEG and with reducing disabled peoples' poverty need to be measured and tracked using both statistics and lived experience, in a process that must involve disabled people and DPOs. In Glasgow, there is significant monitoring of child poverty. A similar focus is needed to monitor poverty for disabled people. GCC Financial Inclusion Team are one of the partners, with other CPP partners, DPOs and specialist third sector organisations, that could lead the monitoring of outcomes from a Glasgow Disability Poverty Reduction Plan and progress in reducing the Disability Employment Gap.

d. Covid-19, poverty and employment for disabled people: new learning

The experience of Covid-19 has led to some new learning, drawn out at the 26 May 2021 event. People discussed online and real-world working. Whilst 'blended' work offers opportunities for inclusion, a flip side may be further marginalisation by disabled people from the workplace due to being expected to work from home.

A DPO representative said:

> 'People have described the COVID experience has been the biggest ever experiment in homeworking. I think it is definitely true that employers are more minded to consider flexibility around home working, which can only be a benefit to disabled job seekers. But we need to make sure [disabled people working from home] have the same opportunities for professional development as colleagues. One of the risks around a move towards homework and flexible working could be further isolation.'

Another participant highlighted:

> '... the idea of additional costs, travel, all that coming into it, there would be a danger that companies would take that as a cheap aspect to bring people on board the company, you know, ... all of the accessibility wouldn't have to be answered because you are working from home.'

A GCIL representative argued that homeworking would remain, impacting on skill requirements for jobs: *'I think, inevitably, there will be a refocus on what the core skills required in jobs are going to be. Because ... I would suspect there will always be an element of working from home for a lot more people.'*

A GCC employee at the event described how working from home had helped them retain work:

> 'I have a long-term health condition, was off work for 12 months and if we hadn't been working from home, I ... probably would still be off just now because I don't think I would have coped with the daily going in and out of the office.'

A disabled person pointed out how online interviews may alter awareness of disability by employers: *'You know, in this environment you don't see disabled people in the same way. You don't see the wheelchair coming into the room for an interview. There's nothing there that signals it.'*

However, Covid-19 had also revealed poverty and the role of DPOs in mitigating this, as a disabled participant noted:

> 'I think they should give more funding to people like GDA or other organisations, because without [GDA] paying for my taxis to get me to get my COVID jag, I wouldn't have been able to go. And if you hadn't given me toilet roll, I'd need to get the free Metros [newspapers]. The funding should go to you, because you know what we need.'

Tressa Burke, GDA, highlighted the extent and impact of digital exclusion revealed during Covid-19:

> 'We're talking about poverty and poverty's not just about money. Money is fundamentally important, but so too is poverty of opportunity and connections. The internet is one connection, but connections to people and relationships are the things that sustain us all. Disabled people are so far removed from this. I was shocked myself when we realised that 60% of the people we spoke to were digitally excluded … Disabled people aren't looking for the Earth. They're looking for some of what others have. It starts with the connections and relationships.'

A participant noted how gaining support from GDA with an internet connection during Covid-19 had helped them:

> '… there's so many things that it has enabled me to do … The most important thing was I could see my mum and brother. My mum is north of Inverness and my brother is at [a community for people with learning disabilities] … Thanks to GDA, I've been able to see them, take part in Christmas and birthday celebrations with them. It's allowed me to take part in meetings … training courses and courses for enjoyment … These are all things that I don't think many people would think of.'

A councillor reflected on Covid-19 and disabled peoples' poverty and how this required action across public services:

> 'I think poverty and the discriminatory issues were there anyway. The pandemic has simply shone a light on that. It's a light that we cannot and should not want to put back out. We have to work out how to address and fix some of those problems. The council can't solve everything on its own.'

A Social Security Scotland representative talked about how Covid-19 offered a positive opportunity for public services to break silo working and enhance inclusion, like the 'one door' idea:

> 'There's lots of organisations that stay within their silos… COVID has allowed us to explore further where we can create a bigger hub. [Name], you said you were having to make a referral, but the other organisation doesn't have the budget. If you're in a virtual space and you can make those connections, surely COVID has given us an opportunity to create a bigger space … We need to get closer working, so you don't need to worry about going to a closed door.'

Covid-19 demonstrates that public services and DPOs need to work together to reduce poverty. Alongside this there is a need to ensure that homeworking is used to boost employment and career development for disabled people.

e. Final summary from the co-design event

The event drew together evidence from disabled people, DPO leaders and staff, public services, and the third sector. Jim McCormick summed up:

> 'There's a central insight here which is, given that disabled people account for about half of all households in poverty, and it might even be more in Glasgow, then there is no pathway to achieving our anti-poverty targets just through housing or just through social security. Without a new deal, to use old language, a new settlement in terms of jobs and training and volunteering and education, then - well I'll flip it into a positive: we will get there by addressing those challenges. So, I think the way you and your colleagues have framed this today has been excellent. It has given us a really good framework for applying our minds together.'

The life chances of disabled people have barely changed in decades, with disabled people disproportionately experiencing chronic poverty and endemic barriers to work. 24% of Glasgow's working age population are disabled people, and 31% of all Glasgow residents have one or more health conditions. None of the major challenges Glasgow faces today can be solved without tackling disabled people's poverty and unemployment. This report recommends practical actions by public services, Disabled Peoples' Organisations and other partners to tackle disabled peoples' poverty and remove barriers to employment for disabled people in Glasgow, thinking beyond Covid-19. **The recommendations are in the table on page 4.**

Once implemented, they will enable thousands of disabled people in Glasgow to be able to improve and secure their economic and wider contributions to the city, gaining greater opportunities and higher incomes. This will ultimately benefit everyone in Glasgow.

Acknowledgements

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